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THE DORSETT, FAIRFAX, AND NARCISSA STRAWBERRIES

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INTRODUCTION

Two new varieties of strawberries, Dorsett (U. S. D. A. No. 633) and Fairfax (U. S. D. A. No. 613), described in this circular, are being introduced primarily for their high dessert quality. Both varieties under normal conditions have shown outstanding dessert quality where grown in Maryland, Delaware, and southern New Jersey, while in Oregon, where the Fairfax has been tried, it is also productive and of high quality. Because of their dessert quality, attractive appearance, vigor, and productiveness, these varieties are being introduced for trial in sections of the country approximating the latitude of Maryland and New Jersey and possibly farther north, as well as in the Pacific Northwest. They have shown no weakness as compared with standard sorts. Tests have not been extensive enough to determine their definite climatic adaptation or all their possible uses.

A third variety, Narcissa (U. S. D. A. No. 520), is being introduced for the Northwest because of its high dessert quality and disease resistance there.

THE DORSETT

ORIGIN AND SELECTION

The Dorsett (U. S. D. A. No. 633) originated from a cross of Royal Sovereign × Howard 17 (*Premier*), made in 1923 at the United States Plant Field Station near Glenn Dale, Md. It was among the selections made from this cross in 1925. In 1930 it appeared very promising where tested in southern New Jersey. Its vigor, productiveness, and dessert quality were outstanding. In 1932 trials made at different points in Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey indicated that it was worthy of introduction as a variety for home gardens and local markets in sections having conditions similar to those in the States mentioned.

CHARACTERIZATION

The Dorsett is a vigorous-growing variety, under normal conditions producing many runners and making a heavy matted row, which may become too dense when it is grown on rich soil. The leaves are usually smaller and not so glossy as those of the Fairfax and slightly lighter in color than those of Howard 17. When growing vigorously, the petioles become very long. The leaves have not been seriously injured by leaf-spot diseases, and it is considered as resistant to these diseases as Howard 17.



FIGURE 1.—The Dorsett strawberry, showing fruit clusters with a large number of fruits ripening at the same time. Normally the stout fruit stems hold the clusters well off the ground

The flower stalks are not so strong as in the Fairfax, but are much more erect than in Howard 17. Owing to the fact that fewer berries usually mature per flower stalk than in the Fairfax, most of the fruit is held up off the ground. The branching of the flower stalks is irregular, both high and low branching occurring. Pollen production is perhaps about as abundant as in Howard 17, but far less so than in the Fairfax. The tertiary and quaternary flowers often do not set fruit. Because of the number of runner plants that this variety makes the yield is heavy in a wide matted row, even though the flower stalks do not set all their flowers. (Fig. 1.)

Its ripening season begins at about the same time as that of Howard 17, but a much larger early crop is produced. In 1932 in New Jersey its season was longer than that of Howard 17 (June 3 to 21), whereas at Glenn Dale, Md., it was shorter, extending from May 25 to June 8.

The fruit is usually conic in shape, sometimes long conic, and the early berries are somewhat irregular. However, they present a very uniform appearance, as shown in Figure 1. The color is bright red, lighter than Howard 17, especially late in the season, with greenish, yellow, or reddish seeds, and it does not become dark when the fruit is overripe. The seeds are slightly below the surface, which, together with a somewhat tender epidermis, makes it more susceptible to bruising than Fairfax, but not so susceptible as Howard 17. The flesh is pinkish red, somewhat firmer than Howard 17, but not as firm as the Fairfax. It will not stand long-distance shipment without careful handling.

Its flavor is mildly subacid; under normal conditions it is sweet and very pleasing, but not as rich as Fairfax. However, when the fruit is overripe the flavor does not become so objectionable as in many other varieties. In one season of much rainfall in Maryland, when berries lacked sweetness, the flavor was better than that of Fairfax. It has succeeded especially well on heavy soil.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF FRUIT

Form, conic, sometimes round to long conic; size large, except toward end of season; pubescence on pedicel adpressed; calyx slightly reflexed in mature berries, large; berry, including apex, ripens uniformly; color bright red; seeds greenish yellow or reddish, slightly sunken; flesh light red, texture medium firm, without cavity, juicy; shipping quality only fair; flavor mildly subacid, aromatic; dessert quality very high. Season as early as Howard 17 in Maryland and New Jersey.

THE FAIRFAX

ORIGIN AND SELECTION

Although its parentage is not definitely known, the Fairfax (U. S. D. A. No. 613) strawberry is probably the result of a cross of Royal Sovereign $\times$ Howard 17 (*Premier*). The cross was made in 1923 at Glenn Dale, Md., and the Fairfax was among the selections made in 1925. In 1928 its characteristic fine appearance, exceptional firmness, and high dessert quality were outstanding throughout the whole season. In 1930 in southern New Jersey, where a large number of United States Department of Agriculture seedlings were being tested, it, together with the Dorsett, again had these qualities, as well as vigor and productiveness.

CHARACTERIZATION

Under the conditions observed the Fairfax produces more runners than does Howard 17. It is, however, a moderate runner producer, not making a dense matted row. The leaves are dark green, somewhat glossy, usually large, and somewhat cupped. Leaf spot (*Mycosphaerella fragariae*) and leaf scorch (*Diplocarpon earliana*) have never affected it seriously, and it is considered as disease resistant as Howard 17.

The flower stalks are strong and upstanding. As the fruit matures the clusters tend to fall over, but the later-ripening berries are usually held off the ground. The flowers are large and are among the most

abundant pollen producers of all varieties, producing far more pollen than such eastern varieties as Howard 17, Klondike, Missionary, and Aroma. As a result all the fertile flowers set fully pollinated fruit. Nearly all the flowers are fertile and set fruit under ordinary conditions.

In season the Fairfax is about the same as Howard 17. Though it begins blooming early, no appreciable frost damage has been noted. The fruiting season extends over a long period. In 1932 at Glenn Dale, Md., it began ripening on May 25 and continued until June 17. When



FIGURE 2.—A fruit cluster of the Fairfax strawberry, showing a tendency for the cap or hull to clasp the berry

grown under favorable conditions the primary berries as well as the later-ripening berries become very large.

Generally the shape remains regular throughout the season, and in this respect the Fairfax is one of the most uniform varieties. Though the primary berries on the cluster are somewhat irregularly wedge-shaped, the shape is typically conic. (Fig. 2.) In color the ripe fruit is a bright red, becoming dark red when overripe. The seeds are yellowish green. The calyx is large and dark green, inclosing the immature fruit but becoming recurved as the fruit ripens. Because of its color and shape the fruit presents a very handsome appearance. It is much firmer than present commercial varieties grown in the East,

having much tougher skin than Howard 17, and it will stand long-distance shipment, especially when grown under moderately dry conditions.

The Fairfax has a rich flavor and is very sweet when normally grown. However, in seasons of excessive rainfall in the East its flavor may be less rich. At Corvallis, Oreg., it retained its flavor better than any other sort in cool, wet weather. The fruit turns bitter only in excessively hot, dry weather.



FIGURE 3.—A fruit cluster of the Narcissa, a strawberry variety of high quality for testing in Oregon and Washington

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF FRUIT

Form, uniformly blunt conic, except that primary berries may be wedge-shaped; size large, except toward end of season; pubescence on pedicels abundant and outspreading; calyx slightly reflexed in mature berries, large; berry, including apex, ripens uniformly; color bright red; seeds yellow or greenish, even with surface; flesh red to dark red, without cavity, texture very firm, juicy; shipping quality very good; flavor mildly subacid, aromatic; dessert quality very high. Season about the same as Howard 17 in Maryland and New Jersey and slightly earlier than Marshall in Oregon.

THE NARCISSA

The Narcissa (U. S. D. A. 520) strawberry is also being introduced by the United States Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Oregon State Agricultural College, for trial in Oregon and Washington. (Fig. 3.) It originated from a cross of Royal Sovereign and

Howard 17 (*Premier*) made in 1923 at the United States Plant Field Station near Glenn Dale, Md. It was selected in 1925.

Though the plants were healthy, vigorous, and productive, and the fruit of exceptional dessert quality, the fruit was attacked by the leather-rot fungus, *Phytophthora cactorum*, a rare berry disease, at Glenn Dale, Md., and has not been widely tested in the East. However, in Oregon it has not only been outstanding in yield, dessert quality, and vigor of plant, but has been especially resistant to fruit rots. As compared with Marshall, the plants are more disease resistant and the berries slightly earlier, much more uniform in size and shape, somewhat smaller, and better in dessert quality. It is therefore recommended for the Northwest.

Additional information regarding this variety may be obtained from the Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Oreg.

NAMING AND INTRODUCTION

The Dorsett is named for P. H. Dorsett, of Glenn Dale, Md., formerly senior agricultural explorer of the United States Department of Agriculture, who has introduced into this country thousands of new plants, including some strawberries, particularly from the Orient. Mr. Dorsett retired from the department June 30, 1932.

The Fairfax is named for the town and county of that name, in Virginia, the county being that in which Mount Vernon, Washington's estate, is located.

The Narcissa is named for Narcissa Whitman, wife of Marcus Whitman, the missionary explorer.

All three varieties are being introduced by cooperating nurseries, the Dorsett and Fairfax in the East and the Narcissa in the Northwest. The United States Department of Agriculture has no plants for distribution.

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